



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

### Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

### About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

A PIONEER MOTHER  
OF  
CALIFORNIA

ELISHA BROOKS



---

---

From the library of  
WILLIAM ALPHA COOPER  
1868-1939  
Department of Germanic Languages  
1901-1934

---

---





A  
PIONEER MOTHER  
OF CALIFORNIA

By ELISHA BROOKS

---

*Written for his grandchildren to show them how  
the emigrants crossed the Plains, and also  
what manner of person was their  
Great Grandmother*

Copyright, 1922  
By ELISHA BROOKS  
HARR WAGNER PUBLISHING CO.  
San Francisco  
California



917.94

B872p

## PUBLISHER'S FOREWORD

Early in the present year there was printed in San Francisco a modest volume bearing the title "Elisha Brooks." Its pages held this veteran educator's own story of his crossing of the plains in 1852 with his mother, Eliza Ann Brooks, and her little family. On the insistence of the friend who was responsible for the publication of the story, there appeared in addition a very brief biography of Mr. Brooks, with a few passages expressing the esteem in which he is held by his acquaintances.

Only one hundred volumes were printed, the entire edition going to personal friends. So instant was the response, however, from those who recognized its value both as an historical document and as a real contribution to California literature, that the author has been prevailed upon to allow the publication of an edition for wider distribution.

Under the Title, "A PIONEER MOTHER OF CALIFORNIA," this is Mr. Brooks' own story of his heroic mother as given to his grandchildren and friends in the original volume, save for such few corrections as he has chosen to make. The friend to whose interest and generosity was due the publication of the first edition modestly preferred to remain unknown. Believing the public entitled to know to whom California is thus indebted, Mr. Brooks has prevailed upon him to allow due credit to be given. He is here made known as "Clinton E. Worden, Patron and Friend."

HARR WAGNER.

**DEDICATED  
TO HIS MOTHER**

**IN MEMORY OF HER BRAVERY AND  
HEROISM IN TAKING HER LITTLE  
CHILDREN ACROSS THE PLAINS, AND  
IN RECOGNITION OF HER SUPREME  
DEVOTION TO HER FAMILY IN AD-  
VERSITY.**





ELIZA ANN BROOKS

## AN INTRODUCTION



R. ELISHA BROOKS of Ben Lomond, Santa Cruz County, California, has entertained many audiences in San Francisco, in various parts of the country, at Stanford University and in his Ben Lomond home with an account of his trip across the Plains in the early days; and for years he has had many urgent requests that it be published as a tribute to the brave mother who faced the wilderness alone with her little children, while strong men turned back in fear. Its publication has also been urged because of its historical value as the account of one of the actors in the drama who, a boy of eleven unable alone to lift the ox yokes, was called on to do a man's work.

Furthermore, Mr. Brooks' friends believe that a sketch of his struggles in the wild pioneer days—thrown as he was entirely on his own resources, and armed only with a resolute will that broke down all barriers—might rouse a spirit of emulation in many a youth now drifting idly into a useless manhood.

They ask leave to peer through the mists of three score years. First, they would show their hero, the young Elisha, a twelve-year-old cowboy, mounted on his Indian pony, riding the range through the cold Sierra storms for eighteen hours

out of every twenty-four. Later, they would surprise him in his miner's cabin, poring over his books by a dim fagot-light through the "wee sma' hours," trying to catch up with the little fellows in pinafores, "who spelled him down and read him out," as he says.

In contrast to those days of hardship and painful effort, they would look in today, on the octogenarian, who, having outridden the storms, is resting peacefully in his beautiful home on the heights above Ben Lomond. His eyes are comforted by an amphitheatre of beautiful sheltering hills, and his ears soothed by words of affection and esteem—tribute of admiring neighbors and dear friends.

The inspiration of such a life—such conquering of obstacles, such accomplishment, such serene fruition—should not be denied, claim the friends of Mr. Brooks, to those to whom it might be the needed incentive, the mighty spur, inducing them to triumph over their own petty difficulties, or, mayhap, "to take up arms against a sea of troubles and, by opposing, end them."

Under the spell of this plea, Mr. Brooks has finally overcome his modesty and yielded to the entreaties of his friends, especially to one who asks the privilege of providing the means for the publication of this story, with the strict injunction that his identity shall not appear.

So there follows a short account of the salient points in this interesting career, together with incidents—contributions of friends—which serve to lighten and amuse. In it and through it, we may walk with our hero and ride with him and

laugh with him through a singularly alluring pilgrimage over the plains and mountains of a varied but successful life. And finally we may join his neighbors in the hope that he may long be spared as an inspiration to all who know him.

## THE PIONEER MOTHER

*She braved the dangers of the west  
And followed on at love's behest.  
The wide, still plains of endless view  
Beneath the deep sky's arching blue;  
The waste of desert, lone and dry;  
The mountain ridges, rough and high;  
Cold, hunger, death—she braved them all  
And followed still love's beckoning call.*

*Love was her strength; devotion, power.  
She grew in fineness with the hour;  
She held of beauty more than face,  
Or form, or body's youthful grace.  
Uncouth of dress, or rough of hand,  
And marked by all the miles she spanned,  
She stands above the highest here—  
The Mother of the Pioneer!*

*—Harry Noyes Pratt.*

Dedicated to Eliza Ann Brooks  
and those other heroic  
pioneer mothers who gave  
so much for California.



## THE STORY OF A PIONEER



RECENTLY I took a trip by rail from California back to my boyhood home in Michigan, which trip revived scenes of a journey made over the same section of country more than half a century before. Comfortably seated in a luxurious car, I gazed out of the window trying to locate ancient land marks, while across my memory trekked an old ox team carrying all the wealth of my mother and her little children on a long, lone journey to the West. As we sped over the land, the picture films of half a hundred years ago and more, though dim and faded, unrolled as in a dream. On that spot I saw this little family asleep under the stars, the stealthy savage creeping upon them. Fifteen minutes later last night's camp ground, with the little group gathered around the fire of buffalo chips, eating their frugal supper, the music for the banquet furnished by the "wolf's long howl," had flitted by. Every fifteen minutes, that tireless iron horse whisked its train over a day's journey of the gaunt, plodding ox team. Here we were surrounded with ease and safety and plenty, while out there toil and danger and hunger "followed fast and followed faster." Then



the spirit of the Ancient Mariner overpowered me, compelling me to tell my story.

In 1850 my father caught the gold fever raging all over Christendom and heathendom and "crossed the Plains" to California in search of health as well as gold.

Two years later, having recovered his health in a measure, he wrote back that if we were there he would make his home in California; so on the 28th of April, 1852, just two weeks after receiving this letter, my mother loaded all her worldly possessions, consisting of a stock of provisions and a camp outfit, into a canvas covered wagon drawn by four yoke of oxen; and with her little family of five boys, aged respectively four, six, nine, twins of eleven, one of whom was myself, and a girl of thirteen years, she bade goodbye to the old cabin home and the surrounding malarial swamps in St. Joseph County, Michigan, and took up her march of two thousand eight hundred miles, as the road winds, in search of the land of good health, more alluring to us than visions of gold. A man was engaged to drive the team for his passage, and we joined a company just setting out for that wonderful country where they "picked up gold in the streets." Two cows were also taken to provide milk and two laying hens in a coop at the tail end of the wagon.

A bag of dried apples kept closely guarded was a part of our stock, but I got in my deadly work on those apples once when nobody was look-

ing, and I remember those dried apples. From my experience I can recommend dried apples as an economical diet; you need but one meal a day; you can eat dried apples for breakfast, drink water for dinner and swell for supper.

The roads were very primitive in this new and thinly settled country, the sloughs and streams unbridged. It was early spring, and there was mud, mud everywhere—slush to drive through, to eat in, to sleep in. Now and then a blizzard or a snowstorm, huddling us around our sheet iron stove in the wagon, gave a parting serenade, and began the toughening process for what was to follow. One belated blizzard drove the thermometer to nineteen below zero, and us into a farm house, where a rousing fire of hickory logs thawed us out and saved our lives.

Soon the world began to unfold its wonders to our untraveled eyes. The St. Joseph River, flowing silently, solemnly, on our course, raised the wonder whether all those waters flooded the world down the way we were going, and whether our road led into the flood. Then the answer came as we stood on the Southern shore of Lake Michigan, whose dark rolling waters, cold, beckoning, moaning under an icy wind, stretched away, away beyond the end of the world—a wide, vast sweep of mystery and awe to our young minds.

We found the "Slough of Despond" right across our path and spent a whole day bridging it with willows which we dragged a mile or so for the purpose. By the time all the teams were

across, our bridge of brush had sunk beneath the ooze, and the people crossed on slender poles, or jumped across aided by the carcasses of two horses that had conveniently perished in the mire. Our mother, in attempting to walk a pole with her youngest child in her arms, fell in and was fished out in such a state that her children did not know her. We never before saw mother look like that.

We pitched our camp on the bank, and soon after dark one of those dreaded prairie storms came up and showed us how sloughs were made. The tempest lasted through the night; the slough overflowed its banks, covering our camp by morning with water several inches deep. One of my brothers and I had made our bed on the ox yokes in the tent while the rest were curled up in the wagon. Ox yokes are not very good mattresses—there is not enough spring in them. At least I thought so then. At about midnight we were awakened to find our tent blown down upon us, and our bed floating, while we, almost suffocated, were taking a bath somewhere in the interior. We climbed, dripping, into the wagon, which we found by feeling through the darkness, and stood up in wet misery until morning, then plodded on our joyful way.

We crossed the Mississippi River on a little ferry boat, just large enough to hold one wagon and team, propelled by two horses, one on each side of the boat, in a treadmill. We had to sail up a western branch of the river about seven



miles to find a landing that offered ground firm enough to bear our wagons.

A picture lingers in my memory of us children all lying in a row on the ground in our tent, somewhere in Iowa, stricken with the measles, while six inches of snow covered all the ground and the trees were brilliant with icicles. A delay of a week to enjoy the measles put us on our feet again, and we drove on.

As we drew near Council Bluffs on the Missouri River, the cry of "Indians, Indians," turned me into stone. Just ahead, a band of blanketed, feathered, beaded, fringed, wild looking objects barred our way and halted us. I thought our days were numbered, and that the days of my life were eleven years and five months. I felt sad to have to die so young. But remembering then that there were just two classes of people in the world, the quick and the dead, I said to myself, "Come, now, I must be quick or I'll be dead." So, forgetting my pistol, with which I was going to slay whole tribes of Indians—an old Allen's revolver more dangerous to the shooter than to the shootee—forgetting that pepper-box as we called it, I slunk under the wagon in abject terror, peering through the wheels to watch the proceedings and take my last look at the landscape. I had just commenced to say "Now I lay me down to sleep," for I thought it was time to pray, when to my unutterable joy they held out peaceable hands to beg. They were a band of friendly Pawnees and I was anxious to give them all we had.

The next day we drove into Council Bluffs, the last outpost of civilization—the fitting-out place for the long journey through the wilderness. What the wilderness meant in those days you can hardly comprehend now. You recline in a palace car and in less than three days are whisked from the Missouri to the Pacific, past smiling farms and flourishing cities, while the dining car supplies all your wants; and as you doze in comfort on an easy couch, visions of long ago may troop across the field. An old emigrant trail winds among the hills, through the sage covered plains, over the mountains, across alkali deserts; canvas covered wagons drawn by gaunt and hungry oxen creep by; dirty, ragged specimens of humanity; big and little, drag themselves wearily on, crying for water, crying for bread. Indians, skulking on their trail, swoop down on any unprotected party with a yell which, once heard, will echo and re-echo in your ears as long as life lasts.

You can but dimly realize that from the Missouri to the Sacramento one may encounter not a solitary face of the white man except, now and then, an Indian trader or a trapper as wild as the Aborigines, an Army Post at Fort Laramie, and a Mormon settlement at Salt Lake more hostile than the Indians. It was the home of wild animals in their primeval fierceness, and the hunting grounds of the Ishmaelites of the plains.

The air was thick at Council Bluffs with tales of Indian massacres, starvation and pestilence. Here we met many people returning with har-

rowing stories of blood-curdling horrors; the one refrain was that the plains were alive with Indians on the war path. In fact, the storm was brewing that burst about nine years later and resulted in the great Indian massacres of the frontier settlers along the Missouri in 1861.

It required stout hearts to stem this gloomy, regurgitating tide. Our company quailed before it and went to pieces, some settling there and some returning home. Our teamster, as faint-hearted as the rest, deserted us in spite of Mother's earnest pleadings; and there we were, stranded on the swollen Missouri. Having nothing to look backward to, as all our hopes in life were in the West, and all our wealth in that wagon, our Mother, remembering Lot's wife, kept her eyes toward the sunset. After a week's delay making final preparation for the journey, and in waiting for the flood to subside, she crossed the river and pushed out into the mysterious West, into the teeth of the unknown terrors—alone with her six little children.

Our first camp was made near a Pawnee campoody where Omaha now stands; and here in sight of these wild men of the plains, realizing her loneliness and utter helplessness, even our mother's resolution wavered, and she seemed to be catching at straws for support. For a moment she appeared to lean on her little children. She asked us if we wanted to go on, and if we thought we could drive the team, and if we were afraid of the Indians. Of course we could drive the team, and we had just lost our fear of In-



dians; besides, were we not almost there? Then in the loneliness of that night, we saw her—her form revealed by fitful flashes of our fire—kneeling beside a log, pleading earnestly for a vision of the guiding hand to point her destined way; and the spirit, if not the language, of her petition was:

“Lead, Kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom,  
Lead Thou me on,  
The night is dark and I am far from home,  
Lead Thou me on.”

With the coming of the morning, the astral glow in her eyes told us we were going on, so, casting a farewell glance at Council Bluffs and the Missouri River, we cut loose from the effete civilization of the East and threw ourselves on the tender mercies of the Red Men, the deserts and the pestilence; and we found them all, though stern at times, no worse on the whole than some of the degenerate sons of Japheth.

In a week or so we fell in with another company who loaned us a man to drive our team; for, as the difficulties grew apace, our strength proved unequal to the demands. This company proved to be mostly a band of roughs, and our new teamster a cowardly reprobate; we found our trials much increased by his help. One of his fiendish deeds, burned into my memory, was the killing of our chickens and banqueting his boon companions on them. How I did ache to empty my Allen's pepper-box into him, for those were the only chickens in the world. I know it is wrong, but I have not lost that feeling yet, and

I tremble to think of the tragedy that would happen if I should ever meet him with my seven-chambered artillery that shoots backward. Still we endured him as long as human nature could endure for the sake of the protection his company afforded.

The cholera had been raging along the Platte a few weeks ahead of us, and, in one day's drive of fourteen miles, we counted thirty-two new made graves with the inscription on the head-board announcing the death by cholera. As the Sierras were waiting at the latter end of the journey with a winding sheet of snow for all be-lated travelers, the trains dared not wait for the recovery of the stricken ones, but often left them by the roadside with a couple of watchers to bury them when the end came; the stories ran that if the patient lingered too long he was sometimes buried before life was extinct.

It was a time that tried men's souls. By a long delay the watchers might be left so far in the rear that they would never overtake their train, but would be gathered in by the Indians.

We had heard many tales of buffaloes—of trains being run over and people trampled to death by a wild stampede of these shaggy monsters; and we had not long to wait for an unwelcome introduction to them. One morning a large herd was seen on the other side of the Platte River in full sweep toward our camp, which was pitched on the bank. Into the river they plunged, forced on by the mass in the rear, churning the water into foam and heading straight for us as

the only landing place in the vicinity. We all turned out and by shouting, gesticulating and firing into the herd we succeeded in sheering them off a little to one side and escaped with only the destruction of a tent or two and some shattered nerves. We had jerked buffalo meat dangling from our wagon bows from this time until we left their haunts, in the Rocky Mountains. On the Laramie Plains we would sometimes hear a low continuous rumble like distant thunder, and a long black line would appear on the horizon, growing longer and larger until the rumble swelled into a roar, and an immense herd of buffaloes swept by in mad career. These herds were often followed by a band of whooping savages, and their wake would be lined by dead buffaloes with arrows protruding from their sides. These were grand and stirring sights which this earth will never witness again. The buffaloes are gone—slain by the vandal hand of civilized man, merely for his amusement or for their hides.

As the streams and springs where we expected to find water were often dried up, every wagon carried a cask of water for emergencies, and detours off the road were frequently made in search of water and pasture.

In one of these detour camps, a little three year old boy, the only child of his doting parents, was missed at supper time, and we all turned out exploring the country far and near through the dense sage brush that covered all the ground, without finding a trace of him. Soon after dark a terrific storm arose, lasting through the night

and destroying all hopes of finding the child alive. However, the search was renewed at dawn, but, by nine o'clock, it was decided that he had probably been devoured by the wolves that we had heard in the lulls of the storm, and the company, all but our family, hitched up and drove on—our teamster with them—leaving the stricken parents alone in their despair.

In about an hour, a man rode up on horseback inquiring whether we had lost a little boy, as one had been found that morning about two miles away, moaning under a sage bush, nearly dead. It was our missing boy, and the delirious parents took him and turned their team towards home, while we overtook our train in camp that night and rejoined our precious teamster.

At the north fork of the Platte, our trail crossed to the south side, but the ferry had been washed away by a flood, and the river was too deep and treacherous to be forded. Some of the men swam to an island in the middle of the stream and attempted to haul a wagon over with ropes, but the wagon with all its freight disappeared in the flood, carrying one of the men under it to a watery grave. Another was swept down by the swift current until rescued some distance below by a man on horseback, who swam out and brought him to shore clinging to the horse's tail. We spent two days attempting various schemes for crossing, but the treacherous current and dangerous quicksands baffled all our efforts. When the prospect had begun to look too gloomy for words, two Mormons arrived



with timber for a boat, and we all lent a hand in its construction. In a week it was launched and we prepared to cross, when the ferrymen, ignoring our labor on the boat, demanded a price for ferriage which would almost confiscate our outfit. We compromised the matter by posting a guard of our roughs over them with cocked rifles, while we ferried ourselves across as an offset to our work on the boat; then treating those profane ferrymen to a bath in the Platte to cool them off, we drove on.

From this time on the trail was marked with ruin. Broken down wagons, harness, trunks, camp-utensils, mining machinery, dead animals in all stages of decay lined the road, and the track of the Indian was over it all. Almost every day we met parties returning home with pitiful and heartrending tales of massacre and starvation.

It was well that we were not alone in these regions, for the Autochthons of the soil were watching us. Now and then a roving band of Sioux warriors would swoop past us on their horses or hang on our flanks for days looking for a favorable opportunity to gather us in. Our picket guard had no inclination to sleep at night, and the serenade of the wolves was a cheering sound because it told us that the Indians were not there.

We parked our wagons in a circle at night, stretching chains across the openings, and drove our stock inside, while the sentinels, with horses hobbled or picketed near at hand, were posted

at a little distance from camp with weapons ready for instant action. We made our beds in and under the wagons or in tents, and, as we children laid our tired bodies on the ground to sleep, we repeated as faithfully as we could:

"If I should die before I wake,  
I pray the Lord my soul to take."

And too often, what with prowling beasts and prowling Indians on our track, the chances seemed largely against our ever waking again.

As we reached the crest of a ridge one day on the Laramie Plains, we saw just ahead of us a band of a hundred or more Sioux lining both sides of the road. A halt was called for a council of war, in which it was decided to drive boldly on carrying our guns ready for action. Our cowardly teamster was taken suddenly sick at this decision and crawled into the wagon out of sight so that I was compelled to drive our team through that living lane; it was an arrangement that I did not fully appreciate, for I wanted to climb into the wagon myself, only I did not want to be found dead with that teamster.

While making this drive quaking with fear I saw several Indians amusing themselves at my expense. One of them took my whip and brought it down with all his force on the back of my favorite ox, Old Brock, who jumped and struggled so violently as to alarm us. I sprang with a scream and snatched the whip out of the Indian's hands before he could strike another



blow, for we never whipped Old Brock. Why, he was mine! I had raised him and his mate, Old Nig, from calfhood and yoked them up with a primitive homemade yoke when they were only six months old, and they had dragged me wildly over the fields on a home-made sled and dumped me into snow banks and scattered me around as though it was proper. But I had trained them up until now they were big, strong four year old wheelers dragging us to California, and here was a wild Indian lashing them in savage glee just to see them jump. I went mad, and the Whites and the Reds began to swarm, but those disturbers of the peace saved the day by springing around us, shoving the offender to one side and saying things to us in words that I could not spell.

Thus convinced that they were not hostile we camped within a mile of their wigwams, and they swarmed about us all the evening trading and begging. Some of the squaws sat down and made us children each a pair of moccasins from buffalo hide, receiving in payment seven pins per pair. On comparing their pins they found that one had eight, so the rest all came back for another pin, which they got.

They were anxious to buy white children, offering a pony for a boy and two for a girl; but no mother wished to sell her children at that price, though our teamster tried to dispose of me in this way, claiming that was more than I was worth. I had just been expressing my opinion of his style of bravery. Our mother

bought a fine pony for a blanket and a pint of sugar, and I mounted him bare backed with a hackamore bridle, in Indian fashion, to try him out. I never had been on a horse before, and he, discovering that it certainly was no Indian astride of him, ran away with me and tried me out, and found me wanting—to get off and walk. Nevertheless I clung to him for dear life as he hustled over the plain, and in a few minutes I was in the camp of the aborigines. These “Noble Red Men” were very hilarious over my feat of bare back riding, but I was paralyzed at the thought that I was to be an Indian the rest of my life. However, after performing what I took to be my ghost dance around me, and feasting me on buffalo meat or wolf, or some such abomination, several red boys mounted their ponies and escorted me back, and we concluded that Indians were not so bad as they were painted. This proved to be a very friendly tribe.

After this our teamster became more worthless and abusive than ever, and on the Fourth of July our roughs celebrated their “personal liberty” with a drunken brawl and a free fight. As a consequence our mother decided once more to forsake civilization and to take her chances with the wild men and wild animals rather than longer endure the teamster and his associates. In order to get rid of him peaceably she yielded to his demand for a pair of blankets and some provisions from our fast dwindling stores, and we pitched our tent by the willows of a little stream while the train drove on. We watched

their white-topped wagons as they disappeared "out into the West, out into the West as the Sun went down," and we were again alone in the midst of a vast solitude somewhere near the Rocky Mountains—six babes of the wild with our mother. A very lonely feeling overshadowed us as we lay in our tent that night and listened to the ominous growl of the wolves at our very door, a harbinger of the famine wolf hard on our track, and visions of our humble home in Michigan shone bright in the dark setting of that gloom.

From this day forth our faithful team obeyed only our piping treble until they dropped by the wayside one by one, and the staggering remnant dragged us to the Pacific Shore.

Our many delays had thrown us to the rear of the emigration so that the pastures were almost all fed bare and our cattle were getting gaunt and weak. Once in a while, a belated train would overtake us, and we would whip up to travel in their company, until our weary team would totter so far in the rear that their wagons would fade away toward the sunset, and like the Ancient Mariner we could cry, "Alone, alone, all, all alone, alone on a wide, wide sea"—of sand and alkali and prickly pears.

On the Sweetwater River, we came across a band of friendly Crow Indians moving camp in search of better hunting grounds. They traveled with us a week or more, marching by day in our front and on our flanks and erecting their wigwams near us at night. We presented a



strange and weird scene in camp, and a motley and picturesque procession en route: red men in rich robes of bear and panther skins decked out with fringe and feathers; red men without robes or feathers, and unwashed; favorite and actually handsome squaws in elegant mantles of bird skins, tattooed and adorned with beads; unlovely squaws in scanty rags and no beads, and unwashed; papooses rolled in highly ornamented cradles grinning from the backs of their ancestors; toddling papooses without a rag, and unwashed; ponies hidden under monumental burdens; packs of dogs creeping under wonderful loads; and, bringing up the rear, an old ox team with six wild, ragged children and a woman once called white, and sometimes unwashed, for we could not always get water enough to drink. We were a Wild West Show.

Every tree and every rock, and even the elk horns, quite plentiful in some regions, were covered with the names of the pilgrims; and it was like meeting a friend in a "weary land" to discover a familiar name. Independence Rock, a famous landmark on the Sweetwater River, was a veritable pilgrim history, an enormous Rosetta Stone, where people had carved their names a hundred feet up its perpendicular sides, letting themselves down with ropes to find blank pages in this great stone book. Can you imagine our joy on finding our father's name among the rest, placed there two years before? Our names are now there with his if "Time's effacing finger" has not rubbed them out.

In this region grasshoppers were so thick as to dim the light of the sun and make us shield our faces at times with handkerchiefs or veils. Every green thing was devoured, and before we escaped from this plague of locusts, two of our oxen starved to death, and we yoked up our two cows to take their places.

With a lean and worn out team at the tail end of the procession we entered the alkali tracts, only to find the pasturage eaten up, dried up and burned up, and the August sun beating fiercely down on the brackish alkali pools from which we must often drink or die of thirst. Our cows soon lay down and yielded up the bovine ghost; then the death rattle was heard in the throats of two more of our faithful beasts; and we dragged ourselves on with four lean skeletons that actually rattled as with slow and dragging step they wobbled about. It was with mingled feelings of pity for them and alarm for ourselves that we saw these dumb creatures, our only friends, roll up their eyeballs and stretch out their limbs in death after faithfully drawing us so far on our way; and with heavy hearts we looked back on their poor old skeletons as we drove on and left them alone. It seemed a heartless, wicked thing to leave them a prey to the wolves.

We cast aside everything but the most absolute necessities; we exchanged our wagon for a lighter one that we found abandoned—and we had our choice of many—and wondered when the end would come and what that end would be.

How dreary and lonely seemed the solitude of those boundless plains, boundless as a shoreless sea to our vision; and as we crept like a snail, a dozen or fourteen miles a day, week after week, without sight of hill or tree, it seemed as though our camp each night was on the spot of the night before, and we were only marking time on the desert sands. Although pity was rare in those wilds, and the fiend in man's nature came out in strong colors, I saw a few tears trickling over the bronzed, hard faces of some strangers that found us camped one night in a grassless, treeless, cactus waste, with our water cask entirely empty. They gave us a cup of water apiece from their scanty store and helped us on for a few days, to greener fields; and we added to our childish prayer:

"God bless these good people."

We made Herculean efforts to keep pace with these good Samaritans, but they soon went beyond the western horizon as "other friends had done before."

In the Bear River country, roving bands of Blackfeet warriors were often discovered watching us from the surrounding hills, while signal smokes appeared on prominent peaks; and woe to any unprotected party that ventured on their domain.

You will never know the sensation we felt on seeing clear cut against the sky on some frowning or overhanging ridge, a troop of red demons in battle attire, looking down on us as we crept



slowly on beneath them. How large and terrible they loomed up in their wild splendor! On approaching a hostile region, weak parties always united forces for safety if possible, and you may be sure we put ourselves under the protection of a strong party in this land.

After pitching camp one evening in a deep canyon with steep rocky walls shutting us in, and with the wreckage of a train scattered over the ground, we found a headboard over a fresh mound of earth which told a tale of horror. The day before, it read, a company had found this ruin and several dead bodies amidst the wreck, stripped of all clothing, scalped and mutilated, and had buried them under this mound. And this was all; no clew as to who they were or how many women and children might be captives in the wigwams of these demons of the ridge. We cooked our supper with portions of the wreck, while on yonder cliff a watchfire proclaimed the fell destroyer hovering near, and perhaps some helpless, pale-faced sister reaching out despairing hands for succor. Leaving our camp fires burning as a decoy, we moved our wagons silently by hand a few hundred yards down the stream, parking them and driving our stock within the circle, and posting a guard behind the rocks on the approaches to our camp. Although these scenes were all too familiar to us, we felt the weirdness of the hour, and our ears listened intently until dawn for the stealthy tread of the savage; the rays of the morning

sun lighting up the caverns and lurking places of that gorge, were never before so welcome.

North of Salt Lake we were harassed by the hostile Shoshones spurred on by the Mormons. You have heard of the Mountain Meadows massacre led by Brigham Young's Danites five years later, for which a Mormon bishop was tried and executed by our government; but many others unrecorded must probably be answered for by these people when the Judgment Books are opened. We dared not go through Salt Lake on account of their reputed hostility, but passed around to the North by way of Sublet's Cutoff. We had ceased to corral our teams, believing there was no stampede left in them, although we did continue to post a nightly guard.

One of my brothers and I were standing our watch one night in one quarter of the field at a little distance from the camp; the cattle had lain down to rest; and by eleven o'clock all had become quiet. I remember how clear and bright the midnight stars looked down over that peaceful plain; my head fell to nodding to them drowsily as I reclined against my resting pony, when suddenly an Indian yell rent the air, and wild, rushing, leaping shadows went hurtling by with shrieks and tumult awfully appalling. Our skeleton beasts sprang up and away like a whirlwind, pressed hard by the howling savages, until the sound died in the distance, and silence fell upon us again, and I wondered to see the stars still shining. The shadow of doom had fallen and wrapped us in its folds.



We dared not follow in the dark for fear of ambuscades, but, at the first break of dawn, we were riding hard on their trail, ten men and a boy armed for trouble. Towards night, we found our cattle quietly feeding in a secluded glen, while on the hills around Indians were seen signalling to their comrades. It was fortunate that our cattle were too weak to go further, or we might never have recovered them, and bleaching bones would have told the story of another company lost. Our men, armed with rifles, posted themselves in positions commanding the field, while one of them and I rounded up our stock and drove them out. It was sundown of the next day before we got back to camp nearly famished, but you well may believe we met glad faces there.

After some weeks of feeble existence on half rations, or less, we camped one night not far from the sink of the Humboldt, where we made our last cup of flour into flapjacks and ate our last slice of bacon, then lay down to a hungry sleep in a lone and joyless group, while our mother prayed as fervently as mortal ever prayed that the ravens might feed her children in the morning. No ravens came with the dawn, but they were on the way, although the flapping of their wings we could not hear. We made our breakfast on a few small fish that we had caught with a grasshopper-baited pin hook; then we hitched up our single remaining yoke of oxen, Old Brock and Nig, and crept on toward the sunset, conscious only of a vague determination to

drag our bones as near to the land of promise as we might before despair should shut the gates against us.

That afternoon, as we were creeping wearily on, and the children's hungry cry had been silenced from exhaustion, we saw a little way ahead that fabled solitary horseman, or rather a man on a mule, approaching us. As he drew near, something familiar about his form riveted our eyes upon him. He rode up and presently with a joyful cry we were in the arms of our father; and the most cheering of our mother's greetings was: "Yes, the children are all here." I have no words to tell you of our surprise and happiness at this meeting, and your imagination must picture the shock with which the father met his little family out in that desolation in the clutches of famine; but the shadow was lifted from our hearts and the rainbow of hope grew very large. He reinforced our team with his mule, replenished our exhausted stores, and we could smile again.

In those days it took three or four months for a letter from the "States" to reach the mines, so that when my father received the message that we were coming, we were probably hunting our stampeded team among the Shoshones. On receiving the word, he had mounted his mule and started in all haste and with many misgivings to seek us, for he knew from his own experience the perils to which we were exposed. He had ridden from the Sacramento Valley, three hundred miles, alone on his mule, trust-



ing to his rifle for food and the sky for shelter, but with his saddle bags full of beans and hard tack for the emergency he fully expected. As the road skirted both sides of the River, he had crossed from side to side, enquiring of every train for some tidings of his family, until at last he met those Good Samaritans who could tell him all our names and the spot where he might expect to meet us some ten days later if we were still jogging on—though they shook their heads ominously at this slender chance. His health was very much broken by the hardships and strain he had endured, so we boys continued to drive our team; but we knew that our travels were nearly ended and that a grave in the wilderness or our bones whitening on the desert sands were no longer among the probabilities.

From the Humboldt Sink to the Truckee River was a three days' drive over a sandy desert in which the only water was a boiling spring at about the middle of it. In this spring we cooked our pot of beans, as there was no wood nor grass there, nor even buffalo chips, the dried excrement of the buffalo, our main reliance for fuel on the plains. After a night march from this boiling spring, to avoid the heat of the burning sands, and to reach water quickly for our almost perishing stock, we beheld the green banks and crystal waters of the Truckee River by the morning sun; and it was to us the River of Life. I never since have heard such music as the ripple of those waters. Our thirsty cattle, scenting it a mile away, started on a staggering run and

plunged into its cool depths; and we washed the dust of the plains, the mountains and the deserts from our travel-stained garments and wayworn bodies, the gladdest pilgrims that you ever saw, for we knew the deserts were all behind us and only the Sierras between us and the Promised Land.

We grazed our cattle in Beckwith's Meadows and feasted on the meat of the grizzly bear with hospitable Jim Beckwith, the famous scout and Indian fighter. We climbed those mountains and plunged into the yawning canyons, along the edge of beetling cliffs, over rocky, precipitous banks, through "Forests primeval," cheerfully, joyfully, with a light load and light hearts; and from a lava ridge on the summit of the Sierras, we looked down on the wild garden of the world, where ranged the elk and antelope, in meadows blooming from the dawn of time, a wide-spreading land of enchantment unmarred by cities old in sin, hidden away in the silence of the ages, awaiting the coming of the white man—California's Sun Land. And on that landscape we spelled out in letters green and gold, written on the lines of winding, shining rivers, the great word HOME. Standing there at the end of a twenty-eight hundred mile journey, through the most inhospitable part of our country, the vision of a resting place from our wanderings thrilled us with joy for which there is no language.

As we lay by a grand campfire that night, the clouds of the mountain storm gathered about us, and the advance flakes of twenty feet of winter's



snows warned our tired feet to hasten on, lest the fate of the Donner party should be ours. In three more days, we unyoked our team and turned them out to grass in the mines of Butte County at Bidwell's Bar, on the Feather River, just six months from the day we left our home in Michigan.

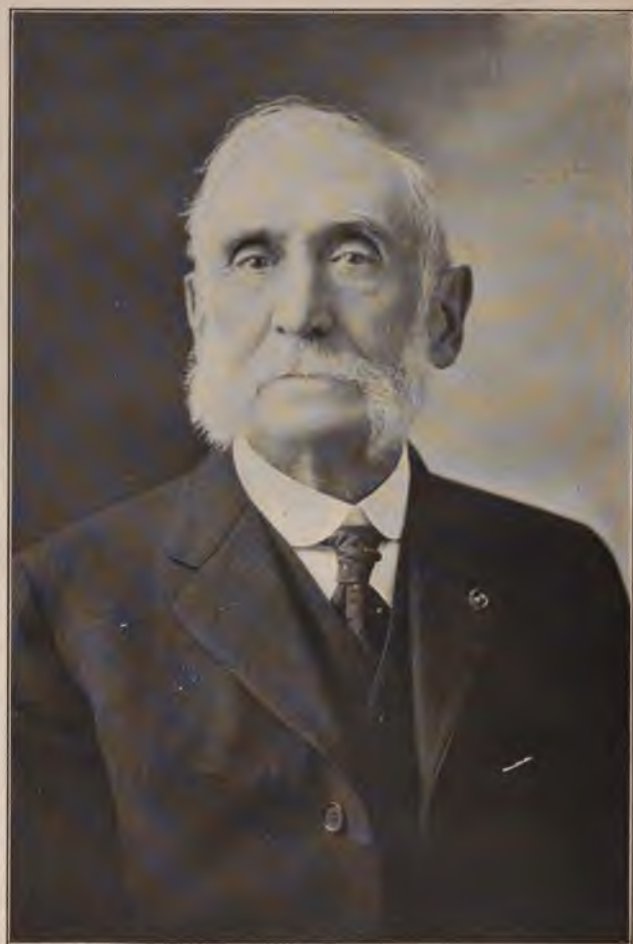
And there in a cold December storm, Old Nig lay down and died, and Brock stood guard over him several days and nights, keeping the wolves away and refusing to move a step for food. To save his life I carried hay on my back two miles up a mountain trail, through that blinding storm; and how heavy with the rain it got! Before he would leave the spot, we had to bury his mate out of sight. No yoke ever touched his neck again, and henceforth he was a lonely animal, shunning all companions.

We children were the only creatures, brute or human, that he ever allowed to come near him; but we had shared together too many dangers and alarms from savage beast and savage man, trials of hunger and thirst, in storm or sun, in deserts or floods, ever to forget. The names and appearance of the rest of our team have gone beyond recall, but Old Brock and Nig will drag memory's wagon until it falls to decay on the plains of time.

Broken in strength, the springs of her vitality sapped by this long hard strain, the little that was earthly of my mother found a resting place six years later in the tomb; and although unsung and her name left out from the roll of the world's

heroines, there may be harmonies somewhere in God's vast starlit cathedrals where the story of her life's rugged pilgrimage is told in numbers that reach to the great white throne.





ELISHA BROOKS

## SKETCH OF THE LIFE OF ELISHA BROOKS



WHEN asked for a sketch of his ancestry, Mr. Brooks replied in the poet's couplet: "My ancestral blood has flowed through scoundrels since the flood, and I never have dared to paddle in that stream." There is a tradition, however, in the family that three Brooks brothers came over from Yorkshire, England, a few years after the Mayflower and that one of their descendants fought in the Revolutionary War. The records show that this old Continental was the great grandfather of the subject of our sketch. On his mother's side his ancestors, Scholfield by name, were woolen manufacturers in England, and two brothers hid themselves in a ship that came over in Colonial days.

In those days no skilled artisan was allowed to leave England, and no machinery nor plans for such were allowed to be carried out. But these Scholfields carried all the plans and some other things in their heads, so on their arrival they built a mill with all necessary machinery in Connecticut and started a woolen manufactory, the first in America. Nobody, however, would buy their cloth; but one day a merchant

asked one of these Scholfields to come in and see some fine broadcloth that he had just imported from England. Scholfield looked it over and finally showed his own trade mark on it. Their cloth sold after that, and President Madison was inaugurated in a suit of broadcloth presented to him by the Scholfields. The grandson of one of these brothers, the father of the heroine of this story, fought in the War of 1812, and his old flint-lock started on that journey across the Plains, but Mr. Brooks thinks that dearly hated teamster stole it, as it disappeared on the way.

Mr. Brooks was born January 1, 1841, in a shake cabin in the back woods of St. Joseph County, Michigan. His parents, George Washington Brooks and Eliza Ann Brooks (nee Scholfield), were early pioneers in this county. His sister, Vienna, and his brothers, Elijah the twin, Justus, Orion and Elmont, were all born there, and two more brothers, Jay and Joseph, were born in California. The brothers are all still living, but the sister died in 1860. On the 20th of April, 1869, Mr. Brooks married Ellen Worth, daughter of Judge Geo. F. and Mary Worth, in San Francisco, and four children were born to them, Alice M., Frederick E., Joseph S., and Myrtle N., who married Chas. M. Whitney.

On reaching California in the Fall of 1852, the family stopped at a sawmill that Mr. Brooks' father with others from Michigan, had built in 1850, on Berry Creek, twelve miles from Bidwell's Bar, expecting to stay there a few weeks

until a suitable location in which to make their home could be found. In a few days, the storm that they had run away from on the mountains reached them in great fury, the streams rose to torrents, the mill was washed away with all the summer's cut of lumber, bankrupting the company. The Feather River rose to a raging flood impossible to cross for supplies; their provisions gave out, and they faced starvation. Fortunately they heard of a pack train snowed in a mile or so up the trail; here the father bought a fifty pound sack of flour for fifty dollars and carried it down on his shoulders. This, with a bear that one of the mill hands killed, carried them through until the flood subsided, allowing them to cross and pitch their tent in Bidwell's Bar.

This fall a few oranges were brought into the mining camp from Tahiti. Elisha bought one for a dollar in gold dust, which he had picked up in the wagon ruts after a storm, and planted the seed in a cigar box. Two of the seeds germinated, and the young trees were planted out in the fall of 1853, on a place two miles from town, where the family had built their home; in ten years the trees began to bear.

One of these trees, still flourishing in their abandoned home, has been regarded as the pioneer orange tree of Northern California. In later years, however, the claim has been made that a grand tree at Bidwell's Bar was raised from seed planted in 1852 at Sacramento and moved to its present location in 1857. The evi-



dence warrants the belief that it should also rank as one of the pioneers.

As soon as they were settled in their home, they engaged in the milk business, which the twins carried on, since their father's health was too frail to permit him to conduct it. As there was no wagon road to their place, the milk was carried on horseback in cans slung in canvas bags attached to their saddles, while the boys rode in front. Rising at three o'clock in the morning in summer and four in winter seven days in the week, for four years they rode the trail. Hitching their horses in town, they delivered the milk on foot through a straggling mining town, which required perhaps two miles of travel, and reached home for breakfast by nine o'clock. After herding their stock all day, the trip to town was repeated in the evening, and home and bed were reached by nine o'clock at night. As this gave only six hours of sleep, they allowed their horses to amble at will on the way to town, while they slept a half hour or so on horseback. And at mid-day while their cattle and all life were resting, they selected a spot in the shade of a tree where the sun would reach and wake them at the hour desired, and invited sleep to finish its "knitting on their raveled sleeve of care."

In 1856 the county seat was moved from Bidwell's Bar to Oroville, the mines being worked out, and the town deserted. As a consequence, their business failed, and, the next year, Elisha carried the milk on horseback to Oroville, ten

miles distant. For this he must get up at two o'clock; and how he did hate that hour, wishing it might drop out of the calendar. His younger brother, Orion, sometimes accompanied him, and once on their return in a pitiless storm, Orion became drenched to the skin and so benumbed with cold that he had to be tied to the saddle to prevent his falling off. All the whipping that Elisha could give the horse failed to force him into a trot. After riding eight miles with the little fellow crying bitterly, they reached a wayside inn, where the boy was lifted off his horse and carried in to a rousing fire that thawed him out. No persuasion could ever induce him to take that trip again, and even Elisha became so worn and weak that he sometimes had to be helped to mount his horse, although he rode like a centaur when feeling right.

The father, not foreseeing the moving of the county seat, had borrowed money to improve his place; so when his business failed, the mortgage was foreclosed, and the family was turned out in the rain in utter destitution. The boys had started a little garden at a spring nearly a mile away and had built a tool house about three feet square in which to keep their tools. The first night out, their mother, being utterly exhausted, slept with her head and shoulders in that house with a few boards as a partial shelter from the rain; while the boys curled up alongside with a few pieces of bark as a pretense of shelter; but O, how wet they all were in the morning and how their teeth did chatter! At



another spring some distance away, they had some lumber where they were expecting to build a cottage; so after a breakfast dug from their garden, Elisha commenced the erection of the cottage, and in five days it was so nearly completed as to furnish a shelter from the inclement weather, and the family moved in with all their wealth—which was on their backs, and very much in rags. Fortunately, their sister was at school in the Alameda Institute, where the boys were supporting her, and from which she graduated next year as the valedictorian of the Institute.

As soon as the cottage was completed. Elisha went to work in a sawmill up in the mountains, and while there, he heard of a State Fair being held at Marysville, forty miles distant, and a circus performing there. Never having seen either a fair or a circus, he determined to take them in; so at sunrise one morning he struck an Indian trot that he had learned from his Indian playmates, and in four hours, had paced off half the distance and was still going strong when a four-horse stage, loaded with passengers for the circus, overtook him. In answer to their cheers, he cried out, as he raced a few rods with them: "O well, if you get there before I do, just tell them all *I'm* coming too." But how he did wish that he too could ride. By three o'clock he reached Marysville—did the Fair, races, exhibits and all, besides taking in the sights of the town. As dark approached, and he was picking out a spot in the hay mow of a stable, where he

could rest his weary bones after he had done the circus, his father drove up, and they surprised each other playing truant to see the circus. At the circus his explosions of laughter were so boisterous that he became part of the show as the wild boy of the hills.

While delivering milk in Oroville, he learned of a school there which he determined later to attend, as his schooling up to this time had been limited to three terms of three months each in the winter in Michigan, and he had discovered that he knew a whole lot of things that were not so, and very little else, he says. So on the opening of the term in the Fall of 1858, being now seventeen, he set up his lonely housekeeping in a vacant miner's cabin and commenced to cultivate his mind "which was sadly grown to weeds." The little money he had saved being soon gone he supported himself by hunting and gathering wild flowers before and after school and selling them in town.

But owing to the five years of exposure and privation in his elemental life his vitality was at a pretty low ebb, and his struggles to catch up with the little fellows in the school was a straw sufficiently heavy to bring him down with typhoid fever within a few months after entering. After two days of delirium in his bunk, his teacher found him "about ready to pass in his checks," he said, and got a doctor who dosed him with senna tea. As soon as the boy could articulate, he said: "Doctor, do they have senna tea in Heaven?" "Why, yes," said the Doctor,



"it's a favorite drink there." "O well," said the boy, "then I don't want to die, for I won't go there, and I don't want to go to the other place." But senna tea was the doctor's religion, and the next day he came around with it again. "O, Doctor, take it away," cried the boy; "I wouldn't drink any more of that stuff if I *knew* it would kill me." Then he collapsed and knew nothing more until he opened his eyes some days later and saw his brother bustling around in his cabin, and in place of senna tea, his "yarbs" were pulling him through.

When the boy asked the doctor for his bill, the doctor answered, "Put all your money on the table; I will do the same, and the one who has the least shall take the pile." The boy put down two dollars, all he had; the doctor covered it with three dollars, pushed it over to him, and left the cabin before the boy could get the thing through his muddled brain. The teacher was asked to return the money to the doctor, but declined to intervene; so Elisha had five dollars to the good, which kept him in food until he was able to tramp and hunt again.

Not long after this, a distinguished looking gentleman in broadcloth and silk hat appeared at the cabin door and stated that he had a cow that was inclined to stray away and he would like to have the boy come and live with his family and look after the cow, driving her up for milking. Elisha could only stammer out some reply, what, he cannot tell, but the next morning he was at the designated house where, to use

his own words, "I was ushered into a room with a carpet on the floor, and a beautiful painted bedstead with spring mattress and snowy sheets and feather pillows, and was told that this was to be my room. Such things I had never seen before. Then I was seated at the table with the family; and that elegant gentleman, the table linen and the china and the silverware—it gave me the lockjaw. All this for driving up one lone cow that had a young calf and never needed to be hunted. Why, for this I would chase up whole flocks of cows; yes, I would beat up swarms of cows; and here I was not allowed to milk that one lone cow nor even to chop any wood."

Then he began to inquire as to who these people were, and what this thing was for, and learned that this elegant gentleman was a brother of Hon. Anson Burlingame, U. S. Minister to China, author of the Burlingame treaty that opened China to the world of trade, and brother of his own teacher who had probably told him of the boy and the lone hand he was playing in a losing game. Hence the introduction to a world the boy had never known. Good men in the mines in the early days? Yes, there were, and the doctor, too, even if he did give senna tea.

At the close of this six months' term Elisha returned home where his help was needed in the support of the family, as his mother had gone to her rest, and his father was able only to hobble around on crutches. Six months later, another term of school opened with the same teacher in charge; and the younger brothers having been

distributed among the neighbors, the twins with a younger brother, Elmont, enrolled themselves as students and set up their bachelors' hall, in a larger cabin where they were joined by their teacher. Their prowess with their guns and their success in gathering and selling wild flowers kept their larder well supplied, and by the end of the six months' term, Elisha, having a remarkable memory which enabled him to get his lessons simply by reading them over once, had finished the grammar school course of those days with several extra studies. While casting about in search for some blazed trail into the future, his teacher came to his relief with an offer of free tuition for him and the twin in the Healdsburg Academy, of which he was to be President.

So in another six months in the worked out mines, they accumulated eighty-two dollars, and with guns and blankets on their shoulders and the money sewed into their belts, they footed it forty miles to Marysville and took steerage passage on a river boat to San Francisco. Here they fell into the hands of a Philistine hotel runner, who took them to a ramshackle hotel on the waterfront. Being walking arsenals, they escaped unharmed next morning and took a little ferry boat to Petaluma; thence on foot twenty miles to Healdsburg and the Academy, where they enrolled as students, Elisha securing an added enrollment as janitor, insisting on this in payment of his tuition. They took a room in a cottage for the rent of which they were to

board the owner, a young man with a healthy appetite. Within a week, however, the young man left them "to get something to eat and save his life," he said. The boys were slightly indignant at this, because they thought they were indulging in riotous living, but as they were allowed the room rent free, they voted him a good but misguided fellow.

Politics were running high at this time—the summer of 1860—secession was threatened, and the Methodist preacher, an eloquent Republican patriot, fired thunderbolts into the ranks of the Southern sympathizers. This preacher, being Elisha's Latin teacher, mentioned the threat that a mob was going to pull him out of his pulpit next Sunday if he had another word to say on the subject, and he had several more words to say. Elisha replied, "Well, I'm coming too, to see the fun." And sure enough, the mob, looking grim and terrible, was assembled next Sunday in the front seats on the men's side of the church. As soon as the exercises commenced, Elisha, with his brother and two or three other young fellows with Colt revolvers conspicuously hanging from their belts, holsters unbuckled, strode in in Indian file, and taking the front seat on the opposite side, faced the mob with smiling faces. And the lashing that those potential rioters took unresistingly from the pulpit did the boys' hearts good, for the mob knew that the twins were from the mines where everybody carried a gun, and their smiling faces kept their adversaries guessing as to what they might or



might not do. Whenever the mob became restive, the boys' cheerful smile and their hands caressing the butts of their pistols had quite a soothing effect.

In the Healdsburg Academy, the students were going at the usual easy pace, but Elisha was counting his money which was dwindling all too rapidly, so by keeping early hours, rising at four in the morning, with his wonderful memory he rattled past them as the stage rattled past that boy with the Indian trot. In six months (how this six months' period seemed to haunt them) the boys' finances had shrunk to five dollars and twenty-five cents and they were two hundred and fifty miles from home by the nearest route. So, sending their box of books to Sacramento by a team bound for Washoe at a cost of two dollars and fifty cents they took to the woods with their guns and a little salt for support. At Sacramento they bought a *little* loaf of bread for twenty-five cents for their supper and breakfast, and after a sleep in a hay mow they took the river boat next morning for Marysville, paying their last cent for passage as the only way to get their books home. The brother got his dinner on the boat by chopping some wood for the cook, and was asked to bring in his brother to dinner also, but Elisha declined on the plea that he had not earned it. At Marysville they met a friend who took their books home and loaned them fifty cents. With half of this Elisha got his supper and it was great. Another sleep in a hay mow, another *little* loaf for breakfast and

dinner, a tramp of forty miles, and they were home again, weary and footsore but glad.

Their school days were ended, and Elisha says that he could write any word that he could spell. He was ambitious to go to College, but there being none that he knew of west of the Rocky Mountains and no possibility of his reaching the East without crossing the Plains again, he devoted all his spare time to poring over what books he could buy or borrow, and his subsequent career showed that his time was not wasted.

He now took up the business of teaming, hauling freight from Oroville over the mountains to American and Indian Valleys, in Plumas County, with a four-horse team and sometimes with a six-mule team and jerk line, climbing to a height of seven thousand feet and down nearly as great a descent on the other side. When the mountain snows blocked the teaming, he packed mules and donkeys over the mountain trails where no wagon could go.

In the winter of 1861-62 he taught his first term of school at Enterprize, Butte County, in a cabin built astride a water ditch where, through a trap door, water was easily reached. The trustees had provided a whisky barrel for the teacher's seat, but Elisha, declining to found his educational career on a whisky barrel, got a box. The next winter he taught a term at Wyandotte, in the same county.

By this time the call of his country had become too loud to be resisted, so he enlisted as a private in the California Volunteers with the

expectation of going East to the front. Going to war for their country seemed to have become a habit in this family. About three months after enlistment, he was recommended by his captain and commissioned second lieutenant, and was marked for promotion by the colonel of his regiment who told him that he wanted him at the front; but the war suddenly ended, and he was turned loose in the streets of San Francisco without a friend or any knowledge of business or city life. There being a strong secession element in California at that time, all doors seemed to be closed against anyone who had worn the blue. Just as his mule team in the mountains began to call to him an old Oroville acquaintance, D. W. Cheesman, Assistant U. S. Treasurer, met him on the street, and, learning of his plight, immediately appointed him as his representative in the U. S. Mint. This position he held three years and a half when a change of administration fortunately threw him out.

In his wild life as a cowboy, Mr. Brooks developed a great love for wild flowers and wild game, and he generally had a bouquet in his hands or a string of game hanging from his belt to be sold in town. He made a herbarium of most of the wild flowers of the county which he brought with him to San Francisco in the hope that possibly he might find someone there who could verify or correct the names he had attached to them.

By chance one day he fell into conversation with a Dr. Morrison, in the course of which he



spoke of this collection. The doctor took him to the California Academy of Sciences where he met Dr. Albert Kellogg, a botanist of international fame, and displayed his collection. The kind old doctor did not laugh (although how he could help it Mr. Brooks wonders now), but proposed him for membership in the Academy; together they went over the collection, giving the flowers their proper names, for not one of them was correct; and no wonder, because the boy had no book with which to identify them. This collection was kept in the herbarium of the Academy as the Butte County flora until the great fire of 1906 burned the whole museum. In the early struggles of the Academy, they welcomed anyone who was willing to help, and Mr. Brooks was soon elected Treasurer, which office he held for nineteen years, frequently receiving the commendation of the President, Professor George Davidson, for his faithfulness and zeal in the conduct of the office.

The principal of the Urban Academy had been urging Mr. Brooks for some time to become a partner with him in the conduct of this school; so when he lost his position in the Mint, he was glad to accept the offer, which was still open to him. At the end of seven years in this Academy, an appointment in the public schools was offered him where a wider field presented itself. Here his faculty of handling bad boys became known, and many an incorrigible from other schools was transferred to him and lost his "badness" very soon. Every boy has some good qualities, and



Mr. Brooks was generally able to develop them into the ruling principle of the boy's conduct.

After three and a half years as teacher and vice-principal of the Washington Grammar School, Mr. Brooks entered a competitive examination for the principalship of the Eighth Street, afterwards named the Franklin Grammar School, in the roughest part of the city, one of the largest and most difficult schools to manage. He carried off the prize and held the position twelve and a half years. Then he was requested by the trustees of the Cogswell College to take charge of that institution. After a year in this college, it was closed on account of some litigation instituted by the founder, and Mr. Brooks was immediately elected principal of the San Francisco Girls' High School, generally regarded then as the highest and most desirable position in the public schools of the State. Ox-teamster on the plains, cowboy, mule driver, soldier—a far cry to this school, where the spirit of refinement, justice, and integrity was demanded, and they tell us that he filled the bill (to overflowing) and was a stone wall on all questions of principle and justice, and their “walking encyclopedia.”

One of his first and most alarming innovations was his announcement that “there must be no discipline in this school, for I find it so often referred to as a prison with prison discipline. Let us forget the word, it sounds too much like driving mules; and these girls are as far removed from mules as the North Star is from the Southern Cross extended to infinity. That old

proverb, 'Spare the rod and spoil the child,' I know must sometimes be applied, but that is only when a boy gets mulish, and these girls never will."

The teachers of this period still living tell us that the result was the marvel of their educational career. Frequently we hear such testimony as this: "Of all the teachers of my school days, the one that stands out far and away above all others, that had the most impelling influence over my life was Mr. Elisha Brooks." It became the custom, perhaps a habit, of the University Professors to advise teachers throughout the country to visit the Girls' High School to see the most perfect order, the devotion to duty, the repose, the homelike, cheerful, happy spirit in a school from which the word *discipline* had been banished; and they made a report, which was published in their records, giving this school the highest ranks of any in the State in its educational standing.

Perhaps it was fortunate that Mr. Brooks' schooling was limited to those three short terms, because it left him free to carry out his own ideas unhampered by any stereotyped plan borrowed from others.

The only credit Mr. Brooks claims for this is that he kept out of the teachers' way, and gave them pretty free rein to adopt their own methods, but the teachers tell a different story; and the affection with which they and the pupils speak of him shows that he placed an unostentatious moulding hand upon their lives, and everywhere

they are "rising up and calling him blessed." He was often urged to accept a nomination as superintendent of schools, but public office never had any attraction for him and he always refused.

After twelve years as the guiding spirit of this school, Mr. Brooks announced that he heard "the call of the wild and must go," and against the pleadings of the teachers and the pupils and the protests of the school authorities, he closed and locked the door on his educational career and threw the key away.

On the occasion of his farewell to the school and the assembled multitude, Prof. Henry Morse Stephens of the University of California gave an address, in which he expressed the universal sorrow at his departure, stating that "in the retirement of Professor Brooks the cause of education is losing the services of a great teacher." All who have ever taught with him are emphatic and unanimous in the claim that they never have found his equal in friendliness, in cheerfulness, integrity, justice and courage, or one whose word once given could be so absolutely depended upon. In these characteristics we discover the secret of his success.

Mr. Brooks has always been a great camper, spending most of his vacations far from the haunts of men.

The following is an account of one of his hunting exploits, forty years ago, that his friends still like to relate:

While camping with his family and a few friends in the mountains of Mendocino County,



he decided one day to climb a forbidding looking mountain about fifteen hundred feet high, accompanied by two of the campers whom we will call Nate and Frank, because those were their names, to get a deer for their empty meat chest. They found the summit and upper slopes so densely covered with chaparral that it was impossible to get through without alarming the deer, which got away unseen. Finding a spring near the summit, about three miles from camp, where fresh deer tracks were plentiful and an occasional mountain lion track, Mr. Brooks announced that he would stay over night there and let his companions return to camp. On reaching camp, Nate's conscience was so disturbed for leaving his friend alone among the lion tracks that he threw some provisions and coffee pot and cups into his saddle bags and rode back, finding his friend just at dark toasting a rabbit on a forked stick over a cheerful fire, and Mr. Brooks was real thankful for the salt Nate brought.

Next morning Mr. Brooks got away at dawn following the game trails through the tangled thickets, over the ridges, into deep canyons, but the deer caught the stealthiest tread of the hunter and disappeared. Late in the afternoon, Frank, too, becoming anxious for his deserted friend, climbed back; and looking down over a vast expanse of hills and canyons covered with greasewood, he heard a shot and saw the most exciting drama he had ever witnessed. On a ridge about seven or eight hundred yards distant stood a hunter, and about one hundred and fifty



yards beyond him, on the slope of another ridge, was a deer bounding over the brush; at each bound the hunter's rifle cracked. After ten shots, the deer, showing signs of distress, disappeared over the ridge. Then the hunter broke loose, and the way he went tearing and leaping and rolling over logs and rocks and brush roused Frank to a frenzy, and, with yells and shouts, he too followed on as best he could. A few minutes later, another shot rang out, and he soon found Mr. Brooks at the bottom of a canyon quietly dressing a one hundred and fifty pound buck; and they discovered that of the twelve shots fired, eight had struck the deer, but only the last one in a vital spot. As the deer was visible only two seconds at each bound, a bead had to be drawn with lightning swiftness or not at all; so they thought, considering the distance, and the rapidity of movement, this was pretty fair rifle shooting.

By the time the deer was dressed, it was dark, so, hanging the carcass on the highest limb they could reach, they began to take their bearings for camp with a wide difference of opinion; but the hunter settled it with the words, "Come on; you'll come with me or be eaten by the lions." So they started climbing and crawling up a precipitous cliff, boosting and pulling each other through and over tangled chaparral, lining themselves by the stars. In an hour and a half, having crept a third of a mile as near as they could tell, they reached the top of a ridge; and just below them about five hundred yards away in the direction

they were going, they caught the glimmer of Nate's fire.

The descent was hazardous but easy through the intense darkness, sliding, rolling, falling—yes, easy, but hard lighting. Mr. Brooks dropped from one ledge of rocks thirty feet, landing in a clump of brush, which broke his fall and probably saved his life. Frank's inquiry whether he still lived was answered with a shout: "O, Nate! Don't spill any of that coffee." The reply that came back revived his faith and they rolled on. For years afterward his friends' greetings were: "Don't spill any of that coffee."

It was ten o'clock when they reached Nate's fire, clothes in rags, bruised and bleeding, but the coffee was not spilled; the deer's liver was in their pockets; and the Ritz-Carlton supper they had can only be found by the campfire's light among the mountain crags.

Next morning Mr. Brooks took the horse in a roundabout way to a point within some two hundred yards of the deer, and carrying, dragging, and rolling that one hundred and fifty pound carcass up that declivity was as hard a task as he ever performed. When he reached camp with his deer tied behind his saddle, the reception he received showed they were glad to see him come in a body, as they said.

Mr. Brooks, from boyhood, has been fond of spending all his leisure tramping through the forests, delighting to sleep alone on the bank of some murmuring stream or on some hilltop, listening to the voices of the night, calling the owls



around him with a perfect imitation of their whoo who-o-o, feeling no fear of canine, feline, or ursine prowlers—sleeping the sleep of a man at peace with the world.

Wandering through the woods with a friend one day, he chanced upon a secluded mountain dell, surrounded by sheltering hills covered with the oldest living things upon the earth, the grand redwood forests, and, in a burst of enthusiasm, he exclaimed: "This is my dream of years; this is where I want to lay my head in its last sleep and let my ashes mingle with the elements on Ben Lomond." There he built his home in 1904 and began the planting of an orchard that is becoming known far and wide as the orchard where the best apples grow. From every part of the State, appeals are coming now for Santa Cruz mountain apples.

His daughter Alice, spoken of by her friends as a wonderful woman, having inherited a love of beauty in nature, laid out a landscape garden there, which soon was heralded as the most charming spot in the mountains; and people make pilgrimages there to see how the flora of the tropics and the snows blend their beauty and their fragrance with the forests of the ancient world.

But one day a voice came out from the distant Aidenn, calling her to come and make a garden there for them; and from the school where she was employed, we hear the one refrain: "She has left earth poorer for her going—some otherwhere must be enriched through her ar-

rival;" and her father says that some day not far hence he is going there to see whether that is better than the garden she planted in the fairy dell on the heights above Ben Lomond. But all Ben Lomond hope that the coming of that day is yet far off.

Ben Lomond was an old mill town where the buildings had mostly gone to decay; whose main street was lined with unlovely shacks; whose sidewalks were traps for the unwary. Travelers shied at the town and passed it hurriedly by. Mr. Brooks, having built his home in the hills back of this place, decided to start a movement for the resurrection of the town. An improvement club was organized with Mr. Brooks as president, and, at the first meeting of the club, he sounded this alarm, in the words of one of the old prophets: "'Where there is no vision the people perish,' and the fulfillment of this prophecy is taking place in your town today. The only hope for the life of Ben Lomond is in summer homes, but summer homes will never be built among these ruins. Where these old shacks stand is the most beautiful site for a park bordering on a lovely mountain stream, but those decaying relics must be removed, and the great natural beauty of the place be displayed; avenues of trees along the roadway should be planted, and the car of progress boarded; otherwise we perish." Then he was called a visionary, an impracticable iconoclast, and they wagged their heads—not all of them—but some of them wagged their heads at him.



Still there were progressive spirits in the town, and a fund was subscribed for carrying out the scheme; the shacks disappeared, and the park was created; but the head-waggers went on with the cry, "What does Mr. Brooks get out of this? No man ever does anything for nothing. There's a nigger in the woodpile somewhere."

Then Mr. Brooks drew up plans for a library and club house in this park, a fund for the purchase of lumber was subscribed by generous summer visitors (although it was whispered that the fund came very largely from Mr. Brooks' pocket), and volunteers were called for to erect the building. Almost every man in town responded, even the head-waggers, for they had pulled down the woodpile and could not find the nigger; and a beautiful club house was built under Mr. Brooks' supervision, to serve as a library and civic center. Then new fronts appeared on some of the houses; streets were widened; trees were planted; elegant homes were built; the town cleaned up; and the tide of summer visitors set in, growing strong and stronger as time went on; and people shy at the town no longer.

A few years ago the San Lorenzo Valley Farm Center, a branch of the Santa Cruz County Farm Bureau, was organized with Mr. Brooks as director, and he is urging people to plant apples wherever a proper location in the Santa Cruz Mountains can be found, with the assurance that they can challenge the world for quality.

Mr. Brooks' vision is widening and he sees a great city of summer homes and home farms, where the apple is king, all up and down the San Lorenzo Valley. That thrown-away key to the door of his educational career has been found, and the door or gateway to a vaster field has been unlocked, and cannot be closed before he has reached the end of his journey across the Plains of Time.

On his eightieth birthday, Ben Lomond gave him a reception, at which almost the entire population was present; and the same characteristics ascribed to him by the teachers were repeated by the assemblage. As an evidence of their regard, they presented him with a silver loving cup with this inscription: "Presented to Elisha Brooks January 1, 1921, by the people of Ben Lomond, as a token of their loving appreciation for his services in the uplift and advancement of our community."

We believe this is a well earned tribute to an extremely modest, earnest, sincere friend of his fellowman. All through his life, we learn, he hewed to the line, and when we realize the struggles and privations of his boyhood, with his back to the wall, defying all the forces that would pull him down, how glad we are that he has come into his reward, and how sure we are that he will hear at last the verdict: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."



Stanford University Libraries



3 6105 005 655 696

917.94  
B872 p

STANFORD UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES  
CECIL H. GREEN LIBRARY  
STANFORD, CALIFORNIA 94305-6004  
(415) 723-1493

All books may be recalled after 7 days

DATE DUE

28D DEC 67 1994

NOV 1994

MAY 1999

JUN 30 1999

6661 1999

STANFORD UNIVERSITY  
LIBRARY  
Stanford, California



